

BENGAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO SANSKRIT LITERATURE
(A chronological frame-work)

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PREFACE

An investigation into the history of Sanskrit literature in a particular province will be of help not only to build up a connected literary history of the land but also in supplying important materials for the study of its cultural history. This purpose is not however served by any study of the history of Sanskrit literature as a whole, for necessarily in a general history of literature-works that have only a local interest cannot receive detailed treatment howsoever important those works may be in the literary history of a particular province. What is of little importance in Sanskrit literature taken as a whole may be of vital importance with respect to a particular province. But no comprehensive work dealing with the history of Sanskrit literature in any particular province has appeared as yet. Prof. K. R. Pisharoti delivered before the Madras University a course of lectures on the Kerala contribution to Sanskrit literature of which the first instalment only appeared in *Shama'a* (October 1928).

The study of the history of Sanskrit literature in Bengal and Bengal's contributions to it are specially interesting. Bengal has her peculiarities in her ways of life and thought which are reflected in her religious notions and ritualism. And she has her peculiarities in her literature too. Besides, the history of Sanskrit literature in Bengal does not seem to point to a progressive degeneration but apparently there are traces of growth along with the process of time. Fresh developments are noticed as the centuries roll on. Bengal, as we shall see in the following pages, had become an important centre of Sanskrit learning almost from the beginning of the Christian era and continued to be so all along. And from about the fifteenth century she came to be one of the most important-if not the most important-centres of Sanskrit culture, and produced a good many works of outstanding merit. It is to be noted that Bengal seems still to hold her position at least with regard to some particular branches of study.

A good many Sanskrit works of Bengal have no doubt been published either in Nāgari or in Bengali characters. But many more still are to be found only in Mss which supply us with important materials in our investigations. So the various Notices, Reports and Catalogues of Sanskrit Mss are of immense help in this matter. An attempt has been made to make the best use of them, especially those of Bengal as also the *Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Mss in the India Office Library, London*. Besides these, I had the opportunity of consulting two valuable manuscript collections, namely, (1) the collection of the Sanskrit Sahitya Parishat, Calcutta (2) the private collection of Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray, M. A. of Dighapatia which is called Savitā Memorial collection in memory of the eldest son of the Kumāra. No catalogue of any of these collections has as yet been published.

Some amount of useful and valuable work on this subject has already been done. But all this is with reference to particular periods or particular topics. Of these the papers of Mm. Dr. H. P. Shastri on *Contributions of Bengal to Hindu Civilisation and Literary History of the Pāla Period* (J. B. O. R. S. 1919), and of the late Manomohan Chakravarti on *Sanskrit literature in Bengal during the Sena Period* (J. A. S. B.-1906), *History of Navya Nyāya in Bengal and Mithilā* (J. A. S. B. 1915) deserve special mention. Much valuable and useful information on the subject is also found scattered in the Prefaces to Mm. H. P. Shastri's notices and catalogues as also, among others, in the *History of Indian Logic* of Dr. S. C. Vidyabhusan, *Studies in the History of Sanskrit Poetics* of Dr. S. K. De and *Systems of Sanskrit Grammar* of Dr. S. K. Belvalkar.

No attempt to write a systematic and complete history of Sanskrit literature in Bengal seems to have as yet been made by any scholar. Dr. Md. Shahidullah of the Dacca University, read a short paper on "Bengal's Contribution to Sanskrit learning", before the Oriental Conference held in Madras in 1924.¹ But he has not so far published it anywhere.

But there are some difficulties which one has to face in the study of the history of Sanskrit literature in Bengal, nay, any particular province. One of these is regarding chronology. Works of Bengal, like those of other parts of India, seldom

¹ *Proceedings of the Third Oriental Conference, Madras, 1925—*
p. XIX.

mention dates or localities pertaining to the authors. And hence the difficulty of settling the chronology is very great and this is quite well-known. But even more than this is the difficulty of determining the place of origin of most of the authors.

In very many cases one has no other way left for ascertaining the Bengal origin of a work than one or more of the following: (1) peculiarities of personal names, surnames or titles (2) provenance of the mss of the work (3) tradition. But it is seen that none of these can be taken to be decisive. It is, no doubt, true that the personal names, surnames and titles of Bengal, like those of other provinces developed some peculiarities from the mediaeval period. It is not, however, always, safe to rely on these peculiarities alone as they are not infrequently found to lead to wrong conclusions. And in earlier periods it is hard to find out these peculiarities if there were any. It is for this reason that we can definitely assign very few works of these periods to Bengal though there is no dearth of evidence testifying to the flourishing condition of Sanskrit literature at that time. The provenance and find-spots of manuscripts of a work cannot also, in every case, be supposed to be a sure guide for determining its place of origin. Not a single manuscript of the commentary on the *Amarakoṣa* by Sarvānanda, undoubtedly a Bengalee, has so far been found anywhere in Bengal¹ though several manuscripts of it are known to exist in South India and South Indian scripts. And it would not be right to regard this as only an exception. As regards tradition we can accept it only with some caution if it is not fairly old and is not supported by any other evidence. And I shall not be surprised if owing to these difficulties I have somewhere omitted some important names and added some wrong ones.

In many a branch of Sanskrit literature Bengal produced quite an unwieldy number of works, any treatment of each one of which would go to make up a fairly big volume. I have had therefore to remain satisfied with a reference only to the most important and representative of them; and have tried to point out the literary tendency of Bengal in every

1. It is true that sometime back Mr. N. K. Bhattasali announced the acquisition on behalf of the Dacca University, of a manuscript from the district of Faridpur of this work in Bengali characters (*Ind. Ant.* 1926 p. 122.) but, I had it from Dr. S. K. De, that on closer examination it was found to be the manuscript of a different work.

direction. On the whole I have, in the following pages, made an attempt to touch merely the outlines of the subject.

PRE-PĀLA PERIOD

Sanskrit language, the language of the Aryans, must have been first introduced into Bengal at the time of the Aryan conquest of the land, though it is now generally admitted that Bengal had a civilisation even before that time. We do not know, of course, the time when exactly that event took place. Neither is this the place to go into the conflicting views with regard to this vexed question and try to determine it with as much exactitude as it is possible for us to attain. It is however, fairly certain that Bengal was already Aryanised by the Mauryan period if not earlier. But we have no definite record of the literary activities of Bengal during the first few centuries of its Aryanisation. As a matter of fact we know little of her Sanskrit culture before as late as the time of the Imperial Guptas, though the evidence so far available would naturally lead one to suppose that Bengal had made her mark in Sanskrit literature much earlier.

Jacobi contends that the Vaidarbhi style of composition was a reaction against the older and more ornate style of Gauda (Bengal) and he is of opinion that the Vaidarbhi style came into existence as early as the third century A.D. (S. K. De-Studies in the Hist. of Sans. Poetics -1920-II. 114. n. 20). Thus the line of argument as followed by Jacobi would point to the beginning of the Christian era when Bengal had as much literary progress as to be able to evolve a style of her own. But it must be admitted that the view of Jacobi has been questioned (loc. cit.).

And we cannot definitely assign any known Sanskrit work to a very early date. Pālakāpya, the author of the *Hastyaśurveda* a work on the treatment of elephants seems to have lived in Bengal-in the easternmost part of it-more properly, in Assam-where flows the Brahma-putra and the Himālaya is in the North (*Hastyaśurveda* I, 39, 101). Nothing definite is, of course, known of his date but it must be a very old work. And from the style of the work Mm. H. P. Shastri is inclined to assign it to a period even preceding the Christian Era (J. B. O. R. S.-1919-300 ff)

We may also refer to one more work here. This is the well-known philosophical work the *Gauḍapāda-kārikā* the

Bengal origin of which is referred to by as early an author as Sureśvarācārya. In his Vedāntic work, the *Naiṣkarmya-siddhi* (IV. 41-44) he quotes two verses one from the Kārikā and the other from the *Upadeśa-sūhasrī* of Śaṅkara and expressly refers to the former as embodying the views of the Gauḍas as contrasted with the latter which is stated to represent the views of the Drāviḍas. There can be very little doubt as regards the old age of these kārikās as they are said to have, actually, been quoted by several early commentators of the Mādhyamika school (Belvalkar and Ranade—*Hist. of Ind. Philosophy*—Vol. II., pp. 96-7.).

From the Gupta period, we get not only definite references to the flourishing condition of Sanskrit literature in Bengal but also several works which can be assigned to fairly certain but approximate dates.

The earliest instance of any Sanskrit composition of Bengal of this period is a small lithic record of king Candravarman (Ep. Ind. vol. XIII p. 133) lord of Puṣkarapa which is now identified with a village Pokharpa in Bankura (*Origin and Development of Bengali language*—Dr. S. K. Chatterji, vol. II. p. 1061). Candravarman seems to have been a contemporary of king Samudragupta who defeated him as recorded in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta.

To the Gupta period also belong the five Damodarpur copperplates (Ep. Ind. vol. XV. p 130 ff) which are of the time of Kumāragupta I, Budhagupta and Bhānugupta. These appear to have been issued by the Governors of Puṇḍravardhana in Bengal. The excavations at Paharpur in Rājshahi has brought to light another copperplate of this period. Dated in the year 158 of the Gupta era it records the donation of a plot of land by a Brahman couple for the maintenance of worship at the Vihāra of Jain ascetics at the village of Vata-Gohali, supposed to be identical with the village Goāl-bhiṭā in which the boundaries of the monument are partly located at present.

None of these records, already referred to, shows any degree of excellence of composition—any sign of the Gauḍa style which seems to have already come into vogue—and their only importance lies in the undeniable evidence which they

copperplates of Lokanātha (Ep. Ind. vol. XV. p. 301 ff), of 650 A.D. and the Nidhānpur copperplates of Bhāskara-Varman of Assam (7th century) (Ep. Ind. vol. XII. p. 65) are the only records of this period which are composed in a high-flown Kāvya style.

It is now generally supposed that Kālidāsa flourished in the Gupta period—some favouring an earlier date for him during the reign of the Imperial Guptas while others assigning him to the period following their fall. But a broad divergence of opinion is still found to exist among scholars as regards the home of the greatest poet of India. Mm. H. P. Shastri has shown that he hailed from Western Malwa (J. B. O. R. S.—1915—pp. 197 ff). Prof. Lachmi Kalla of the Delhi University has sought to prove a Kashmirian origin of him (*Birthplace of Kālidāsa*, Delhi University Publications No. I). Several scholars in Bengal have, also started a movement to establish the close connection of Kālidāsa with Bengal. But the evidences put forward so far cannot be taken to be conclusive to entitle the inclusion of his name herein.

The earliest known writer of Bengal of this period seems to have been Candragomin whose fame rests mainly on his *Candra Vyākaraṇa* though several other works of him are also referred to. Tibetan records like the *Dpag-bsam-ljon-lzan* represent him as having hailed from Varendri (Ind. Ant. 1930 p. 25.) Another scholar whose reputation had travelled beyond the limits of India was Śīlabhadra, a scion of the Brahmanical royal family of Samatāṭa (East Bengal) who rose to be the Head of the great monastery of Nālandā and became the teacher of the great Chinese pilgrim Ywan Chwang. He is spoken of in eloquent terms by the pilgrim and is stated to have been the author of several treatises widely known and highly valued by contemporaries. (*On Ywan Chwang—Watters.*—Vol. II, p. 109, 165).

It was probably in this period that the famous medical writer Mādhava Kara flourished. His surname *Kara* is believed to indicate his Bengal origin. His *Nidāna*, the best known of all his works is stated to have been translated into Persian as early as the 8th century during the reign of Harun-al-Rasid. And if the identification of *Pañcikākāra* referred to by Varadarāja (11th century) in his *Kusumāñjali-Bodhinī* (Sarasvatī Bhawan Series, p. 123) as a *Gauḍa Mīmāṃsaka* with

Śalikanātha be correct then we get another name added to this period.

But besides these stray works there is ample evidence which testifies to the flourishing condition of Sanskrit literature in Bengal at this period. The first reference to any literary activity in Bengal is gathered from the account of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien who visited India during the reign of Candragupta II of the Imperial Gupta dynasty. He paid a visit to Tāmralipti (Mod. Tamluk) in Bengal where he spent two years copying manuscripts and painting images. (Legge-*Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, p. 100) From what is said by the Chinese pilgrim Tāmralipti seems to have been a seat of learning in this time and the manuscripts which he copied might in all probability have been of Buddhist Sanskrit works many of which had been taken to China by pilgrims from time to time.

Love of learning of the people of Bengal is referred to by Ywan Chwang, another Chinese pilgrim, who came to India during the reign of Harṣavardhana in the 7th century. He visited Puṇḍravardhana, Kāmarūpa, Samatāṭa, Tāmralipti and Kāṇasuvārṇa. And the love of learning of the people of all these places finds special mention in his account. Large Buddhist monasteries, which were all seats of learning, are also stated to have existed in each of these places (*On Ywan Chwang-Watters*.- vol. II, pp. 184-191).

Still another Chinese pilgrim I-tsing who almost immediately followed Ywan Chwang and came to India in 673 A. D. definitely states that he learnt the Brahma language (Sanskrit) and practised the science of words (grammar, *śabdavidyā*) (Takakusu - I - tsing, p. xxxi) in Tāmralipti. This shows that it continued to be a seat of learning even in his time.

And we get a confirmation of these reports of the Chinese pilgrims from what we read in Indian authors like Bāṇa (1st half of 7th century), Bhāmaha (end of 7th century) and Daṇḍin (beginning of 8th century). It is clear from what they say that Bengal had evolved (from what date it is not known) a high-flown ornate style of her own, presumably from a very early period. Thus Bāṇa in one of the introductory verses of his *Harṣacarita* characterises the style of composition as prevailing in Gauḍa (Bengal) to have

been a verbose one.¹ There can scarcely be any room for doubt that Gauda of Bāṇa has reference to Bengal; for in another place he has made use of the same term to denote Bengal as he styles king Śaśāṅka of Bengal as the vilest of Gaudas (*Gauḍāpasadaḥ*). Bhāmaha too refers to the Gaudīya (of Gauda)² style of composition in his *Kāvyālaṅkāra* (I. 31-32) where he definitely hints at the controversy raging in his time as regards the superiority of the two styles *Gauḍī* and *Vaidarbhī*. From the way in which he introduces³ the Vaidarbhī style Bhāmaha seems to assign to it a position decidedly inferior to that of Gauda. It also does not seem that the Gauda style was a new thing in his time but it is only reasonable to suppose that it had a history behind it which had secured it a commendable position in the time of Bhāmaha.

Daṇḍin who probably came after Bhāmaha refers to Gaudī and Vaidarbhī as the two most important styles of composition of which he was decidedly in favour of the latter. (*Kāvyādarśa*—I. 40-42).

PĀLA PERIOD (OR PRE-SENA PERIOD)

We are not in possession of enough materials that will throw sufficient light on the literary condition of period. The materials so far obtained are too scanty to justify any generalisation. But we are still in a position to state that Sanskrit literature in its different branches was assiduously studied at this period. The

General remarks
regarding the lit-
erary condition
of the period

1. “*श्लेषमात्रमुदीच्येत् प्रतीच्येत्पर्यन्तवकम् । उत्प्रेक्षा दाक्षिणात्येषु मौडिग्यक्षरदम्बरः ॥*”

It should be noted that of all places Bāṇa here refers to Gauda alone by name. This may be taken to be a covert indication of the prominent position held by the style of Gauda in the estimation of the people owing possibly to its obvious distinguishing feature viz. verbosity. And it is also to be noted that Bāṇa undoubtedly follows this style in most places of his works.

2. That the name has reference to its place of origin is clear from *Kāvyālaṅkāra* of Vāmana (I. 2. 9. 10) where he definitely says that the names of the styles were derived from the places where they were found to have been prevalent.

3. *वेदमन्त्रद्वयस्तीति मन्यन्ते सुधियोऽपरे* (I. 31)

“There are other scholars who suppose that there is another style called Vaidarbha.” The words “another style” seem to show that the Gaudī style has been indicated in a previous verse which unfortunately is missing.

epigraphic records of the Pāla kings supply us with some light in this direction. One of these records viz. the Garuḍa pillar inscription of the time of Nāryāyaṇapāla *Gauḍalekhamālā*, p. 71 ff.) gives a vivid picture of one of the ministerial families of the Pāla kings, in which their literary attainments find a prominent mention. Darbhapāṇi of this family, minister of Devapāla is here recorded to have mastered the four *Vidyās*. It is however not known what these four *Vidyās* were. Neither does it seem to be justified to take them as referring to the four Vedas. His grandson Kedāramiśra is also given the same credit. His son Guḍava Miśra seems to have been the greatest man of letters of the family. He is stated to have acquired proficiency in the *āgamas* (sacred lores), in *Jyotiṣa* (Astronomy and Astrology). The family comes in for special admiration for its exceptional knowledge of Vedic literature (ll. 20-21). Guḍava Miśra appears to have been a good writer as well. His compositions have been given high praise in the record in question. He seems to have composed a work on religious history where he gave elaborate exposition of the Vedas (ll. 25).¹ This record is thus of great importance from the standpoint of literary history. But there are two more noteworthy points here which are not less important and interesting in point of social and religious history of the period. It records how Vedic sacrifices were performed by Kedāramiśra (ll. 11 and 16). Vedic rites do not seem, therefore, to have gone out of use at that time. Book knowledge and physical culture also appear to have progressed hand in hand. Kedāramiśra was as much a warrior as a man-of-letters. (l. 23).

The question, however, may naturally arise as to whether the family of Kedāramiśra really hailed from Bengal. The wife of Kedāramiśra was a Bengalee of Devagrāma. It has been located by Mm. H. P. Shastri in the district of Nuddia (Bengal) (Introduction to *Rāmacarita*, A. S. B. - Memoirs Vol. III). It is not known if it has any connection with Deopara in Rajshahi, the find-spot of the only inscription of Vijayasena so far known (Ep. Ind. Vol. I). Further a man of the position of Guḍava could not be expected to have erected a pillar in his honour anywhere but in his native country. The Pillar exists

1 But the work is not known to have come down.

even to this day in the village of Bādāl in Dinajpur in Bengal, which therefore seems to have included his birthplace.

Mīmāṃsā (which possibly refers to the Karma-mīmāṃsā of Jaimini), grammar and Tarka (Logic) are known to have been studied in the time of Mahīpāladeva (Bānagaḍ Inscription (1. 48) - *Gauḍalekhamālā* - p. 97).

Śrīdhara, a Brahman of Puṇḍra-varḍhana in Bengal, who was the recipient of a land-grant from Vaidyadeva of Kāmarūpa is stated to have been equally proficient in Śruti (Vedas) and Smṛti (Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva - II. 44-45- *Gauḍalekhamālā*, (p. 134).

Scholars of the Vedic lore to whom reference has been made above had, it seems, specialised in that subject and it is only probable that Vedic study was regularly carried on. This supposition gets support from the way in which the Vedic schools, to which the recipients of royal grants in the Pāla Period belonged are referred to. Thus Kṛṣṇāditya is represented as a student of Vājasaneyya school of White Yajurveda (*Yajurveda-sībrahmacāriṇe Vājasaneyya-Śākhādhyāyine*- Bānagar plates Lines 47-48). One Vaṭesvara is similarly represented as a student of Kauthuma school of the Sāmaveda (*Sāmavedāntargata-kauthuma-Śākhādhyāyine*-Manhali plates of Madanapāla, 1. 43 *Gauḍalekhamālā*, p. 154). The word 'student' seems to be significant in the above statements which do not appear to have degenerated into formal and unmeaning ones as yet.

Besides these epigraphic records there are some other sources also which throw light on the literary condition of the period. Rājasekhara (end of 10th century) in two places of his well-known work *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā* (p. 33, 51) expressly testifies to the extreme love of Sanskrit of Bengal.¹

The two most important centres of learning during the Pāla period seem to have been Bhūriśreṣṭhī (mod. Bhursut near Howrah) (*Prabodhacandrodaya*-Act. II) and Jagaddala the locality of which as yet has not been identified.

Of works of this period we know a good deal more than of the preceding period of which we have already given an account. Besides the epigraphic literature, which has already

Works of Bengal
in the Pāla Period.

1. " गौडायः संस्कृतस्थाः " -- p. 51

पदानि संस्कृतं शब्दं कुण्डाः प्राकृतवाचिन्ते । वाग्यासीतः पूर्वेण ये केचिन्मगधादयः ॥-p. 31.

been referred to incidentally, works in different branches of Sanskrit literature are known to have been composed by scholars of Bengal at this period. And many of them are well-known even now. We make only a passing reference to the most important of them.

The most important work of philosophy of this period is the

Philosophy. *Nyāyakandalī* of Bhaṭṭa Śrīdhara of Bhūri Śreṣṭhī (mod. Bhursut, near Howrah).

This is a commentary on the Bhāṣya of Praśastapāda on the Vaiśeṣika sūtra, and was composed in 913 S. E. as the author himself states at the end of his work (Ed. by Vindhyeswari Prasad Dvivedi, Benares). This Śrīdhara was also the author of several other philosophical works, namely, *Advayasiddhi*, *Tattvabodha Saṁgrāha ṭīkā*. But none of these works is known to have come down and they are only known from the references made to them in the *Nyāyakandalī*. Udayana, the well-known author of philosophical works, is sought to be connected with Bengal by a tradition which associates him with the Bhāduti family. But this does not seem to be trustworthy as Udayana in his *Kusumāñjali* mentions the *Gauḍa mīmāṃsaka* probably Mīmāṃsaka of Bengal in a disparaging tone.

Bengal's contributions to Smṛti literature are enormous.

Smṛti. To the Pāla period, we can definitely assign at least two authors. The earlier of these

is Nārāyaṇa—who is by the by, the earliest Smṛti writer of Bengal—flourished during the reign of king Devapāla. He wrote a commentary on the *Chandogopariśiṣṭa* (Bib. Ind.) in the introduction of which he gives an account of his family which was highly learned and well-known. We should also refer to Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa minister of king Harivarmadeva whose many-sided literary activities are referred to in his *Praśasti* (Ep. Ind. vol. vi, pp. 203-7). Two of his works the *Prāyaścitta-Prakaraṇa* and *Karmānuṣṭhānapaddhati* have been published. The latter of this work is highly popular even to this day.

In Kāvya the only work the Bengal origin of which is definitely known is perhaps the *Rāmacarita*

Kāvya. of Saṁdhyākara Nandin of Varendri who

composed the work probably during the reign of king Madanapāladeva of the Pāla dynasty (A. S. B. Memoirs III—pp. 1 ff.). The work gives an account of the reign of king

Rāmapāla of the Pāla dynasty and is thus very important from the standpoint of history.

The dramatic work *Caṇḍa-kaśika* of Ārya Kṣemīśvara also belongs to this period. It was composed in the reign of king Mahīpāla I. There are several other works also of about this period which are associated with Bengal by tradition of doubtful credibility in some cases. Thus the popular drama *Veṇīśaṁhārā* of Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa is supposed to be the work of the Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa one of the five Brahmins brought to Bengal by Ādiśūra.

It was also at this time that Bengal produced several Buddhist literature. scholars whose fame travelled beyond the limits of India and some of whom at least are still deified in far off lands. I refer to Buddhist scholars like Śāntarakṣita and Dipamkara Śrījñāna.¹

The Pāla period also saw Tantracism flourishing in India. The Nāthas who are assigned to Tantras. about 800 A. D. by Wasseljew are stated to have brought down the Tantras. And of these Matsyendra or Mīnanātha is definitely stated to have introduced Kaula rites in Kāmarūpa.²

We know of at least one scholar of this period whose Medical literature. works on Hindu medicine have got an All-India popularity and are still studied and held in high honour, I refer to the work of Cakra Datta or Cakrapāṇi Datta who was in charge of the kitchen of Nayapāla.

It was probably at this period—about the 9th century—that the great grammarian Jinendrabuddhi, the Grammar. famous author of *Kāśikā-vivaraṇa-pāñcīkā* (published by the Varendra Research society) flourished. Almost all the commentaries on this work are by Bengalees—a fact which has led Mr. D. C. Bhattacharya to suspect his Bengal origin (*Sir Asutosh Commemoration Volumes*—vol. III, Pt. I, pp. 189). But without further direct evidence he cannot be definitely taken to be a Bengalee.

1. For a detailed account of Buddhist Sanskrit works of Bengal see my paper in *Ind. Ant.* (February 1930)

2 C. Chakravarti—*Some new facts about Matsyendranātha* (*Indian Historical Quarterly* Vol. VI. p. 178 pp.).

SENA PERIOD¹

With the accession of the Senas the cultivation of Sanskrit literature in Bengal got a fresh impetus. This was primarily due to the persistent efforts of these Brahmanic rulers towards a revival of Brahmanism in all its phases in a Buddhist ridden land ruled ere-long by Buddhist kings-the Pālas. Thus some Brahman scholars attached in some way or other to the court of one Sena ruler or another composed, apparently at the desire, and with the patronage, of the king under whom they lived, works to regulate the religious rites a Hindu was required to perform. It is curious that even some of the kings-who were not Brahmans themselves-composed similar works to which was unreservedly accorded as much reception as to those by Brahmans. As a result, within the short duration of the Sena rule a fairly good amount of ritualistic literature was produced. Thus Aniruddha, the preceptor of Vallāla composed the *Pitṛdayitā* which deals with *śrāddha* to be offered for the satisfaction of the dead forefathers, to Brahmans versed in the vedas and not on *kuśa* grass as later on when such Brahmans were not available in Bengal (S. S. P. series) and the *Hāratalā*-a work on *āśauca* (Bib. Ind.). Vallāla himself was the author of two big volumes-1. *Dānasāgara* dealing with various festivities to be gone through in connection with the *dāna* or gift of various objects. 2. *Adbhutasāgara* a work dealing with good and bad omens and also various astronomical phenomena. The three brothers Paśupati, Halāyudha and Īśāna each had some ritualistic works but unfortunately they are not all available now. Of these Halāyudha was a Judge in the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena.

But though this ritualistic literature may be regarded as the characteristic feature of the literary activities of this period of Brahmanic revival it should not be assumed that this was the only kind of literary production of the period. For besides this, we have some poetic compositions of this period which would shed lustre on the literary history of any age. One of these, namely the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva has rightly earned the praise of

¹ An illuminating account of the literary activities of this period is to be found in an article by M. Chakravarti in J. A. S. B., 1906, pp. 157ff. Some facts unknown in his time are however to be found in the following pages.

the Sanskrit loving people of all countries.¹ Jayadeva was a poet at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena which was resorted to by other poets and scholars of no mean merit. As a matter of fact Govardhana, author of *Āryāṣṭaśaī*—a collection of seven hundred verses, mostly on love matters, in Āryā metre—Śaraṇa, Jayadeva, Umāpati, Dhoyī, author of the *Pavanadūta* written in imitation of the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa—these five poets are stated to have constituted the five jewels of the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena. Of course, we do not get the works of all these poets, only portions of which have been preserved in the form of stray verses in the *Saduktikarṇāmrta*, an anthology compiled by Śrīdharaḍāsa. This anthology preserves stray verses of a good many other poets of Bengal, who are unknown from any other source, including Royal poets like, Vallāla, his son Lakṣmaṇa, his son Viśvarūpa and a good many poetesses, no complete work of any of whom has unfortunately come down.

Another field in which the literary activities of the period found expression is the field of Grammar. Grammatical studies. The most important grammatical work of this period is the *Bhāṣāvṛtti* of Puruṣottama (V. R. S. Series) of the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena. This is a gloss on Pāṇini's well-known grammar and deals with those rules alone which pertain to classical Sanskrit. It seems that Pāṇini was the only grammar studied at this time.

It looks strange that though this period is marked by a spirit of Brahmanic revival which is fully demonstrated by the ritualistic works, we get no work of Brahmanic Philosophy of the time, composed either to give an exposition of this philosophy as it is or to prove its superiority over that of the Buddhists and thus to undermine the latter. The reason might lie in the fact that Bengal at this period was too busy with rituals to devote any attention to deep philosophical thought.

But on the whole the literary output of the period is quite commendable as it practically covered the reigns of two

1. A popular account of the popularity of the *Gītāgovinda* has been given by the present writer in the Bengali monthly *Pañcapuṣpa* (1336 B. S. Kārtika) It will be seen that the work has about forty commentaries and a dozen imitations.

kings only, namely, Vallālasena and Lakṣmaṇasena. For we are aware of little activity before Vallāla and after Lakṣmaṇa. The period preceding the time of Vallāla seems to have been spent in the consolidation of the Sena rule and that following the age of Lakṣmaṇa was disturbed by Muhamudan incursion and hence both these periods were unfavourable to literary activities.

MUHAMUDAN PERIOD

Strange though it may seem this was undoubtedly the most glorious period in the history of Sanskrit literature in Bengal. The amount of literature both Sanskrit and Bengali that was produced in this period is simply amazing. Whether in the field of philosophy,¹ or in the domain of ritualistic literature, or in the province *belles lettres* the productions were equally voluminous. In fact Navya Nyāya (modern Logic), Navya smṛti and Tantra compilations that have been admitted to be the special features of the Sanskrit literature of Bengal and that are still the popular subjects of study here – attained their full development at this period. It was also during this period that the vast amount of Vaiṣṇava literature,² covering different branches of study was produced. It is not possible to give even a short account of the literary productions of this period within the space of a short chapter. The amount of literature produced in each branch was enormous. These commendable literary activities during the Muhamudan period cannot of course be stated to be due to ardent state patronage. The Muhamudan rulers, as is well-known, had with some honourable exceptions, scant sympathy for Brahmanic culture as a whole and consequently for Sanskrit literature which embodied and spread it. As a result scholars had to fight against great odds in order to preserve, in tact, Indian culture and tradition. But there was one great advantage which stood in their favour and helped them to achieve great things in the field of literature even in spite of royal discouragement in some cases or harmless neutrality in others.

The Muhamudan rulers did not interfere with the local Zamindars or chiefs who were the paramount lords over

¹ *Bengal's Contributions to Philosophical Literature in Sanskrit*—C. Chakravarti—*Ind. Ant.* (1929—p. 206, 232 ff; 1930 p. 23 ff.)

² For a detailed account of this branch of literature see *Sanskrit Literature of the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal*—C. Chakravarti (Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Vol. X. 114 ff)

their own possessions so long as they were regular in sending the required revenue to their Muhamudan overlords. And therefore the Hindu chiefs had no difficulty in patronising Sanskrit culture. Besides education in India, as a careful study of its history shows, did not always look up to any state help. It thrived generally through spontaneous help received from the generous aristocracy who considered it their duty to help scholars and desired to earn religious merit in this way. Thus every aristocratic family had a *catuspāthī* (orthodox school) founded and maintained at its own expenses where students from far and near came, resided and had their education free of cost. And on all festive occasions (such as marriage, funeral ceremony and the like) the wealthy section of the people as a rule made valuable gifts to scholars which went a great way in encouraging them.

Of the local chiefs of this period who were great patrons of literature and through whose help and inspiration-direct and indirect—was produced a vast amount of valuable literature in different branches the House of Nadia deserves special mention. During the Muhamudan period—specially from about the 15th century, that is, from the time when the Great Caitanya flourished—Nadia became the most important cultural centre in Bengal—nay in the whole of Eastern India, so that it has quite rightly been described as the Oxford of Bengal. And the contributions of the worthy members of the Nadia House to raise the place to this enviable position must have been considerable.

The most famous of the scions of this House whose patronage to all cultural activities in Bengal has almost become proverbial was Mahārāja Kṛṣṇa Candra who ascended his *gādi* in 1728. He is also well-known in the history of India as one of the most important persons who helped the British to consolidate their power in India. From the keen interest exhibited by him in all literary activities of his time he has most deservedly been called the Mecaenas of his age (Calcutta Review—Vol. LIV, 1872, p. 174).

BRITISH PERIOD

In pre-British period, before the introduction of printing, Conditions of Sanskrit studies in Bengal, as we have seen Sanskrit Studies. cannot be said to have been generally prevalent in all branches, there being some branches more

popular than others. Thus there were some subjects e. g. Nyāya and Smṛti which were specially 'Bengali' in the sense that they were cultivated in Bengal more than anywhere else. But contemporaneously with the advent of the Europeans and the introduction of printing and facilities of communication this state of things disappeared to a great extent. Though the subjects for which Bengal was reputed to have a special predilection still continued to be studied with as much assiduity as ever, other subjects which were known to be more or less neglected began to attract the attention. The immense popularity which the study of Vedānta has of late attained may be cited as an instance. This is one of the characteristic features of Sanskrit studies of this period.

The foundation of the Calcutta University and the Board of Sanskrit Studies (now, Calcutta Sanskrit Association) which made provision for examination in various branches of Sanskrit literature supplied additional impetus in this direction. Facilities of communication urged people—to a larger extent than before—to migrate to renowned centres of learning like Benares where they went not for pilgrimage alone, but for prosecuting studies in subjects not so much cultivated in Bengal. The founding of the Asiatic Society Bengal by Sir Williams Jones in 1784 also gave fresh inspiration for study of Indian literature in all its various branches and led to the rise of a new type of Anglo-Sanskrit scholars imbued with a scientific and critical spirit that has ever since been doing much valuable work in the field of Sanskrit studies. Further the need of successful administration in the country led British statesmen to encourage the study of Indian laws and customs and get Sanskrit books to be compiled on them mostly by Bengalee scholars.

Now let us turn to the works that were produced by scholars of Bengal at this period. We are not concerned here with all that was done by Anglo-Sanskrit scholars as most of their works are either in English or Bengali though almost all of them deal with important topics of Sanskrit literature. But it seems that we should not omit to mention, in this connection, the various Notices and Descriptions of Sanskrit Manuscripts compiled, among others, by those two veteran scholars namely the late

Rājā Rājendra Lāl Mitra and Mm. Dr. H. P. Śāstrī.¹ The various critical editions of old Sanskrit texts published in the Bibliotheca Indica should also be noted here.

We should begin our survey of the literary output of this period by referring, first of all, to some works
Legal Digests. in the production of which the Government took keen and active interest. When the British first came to power in India they felt the necessity of learning the laws and customs of the land they were going to rule. So at the instance of the Government several digests of Hindu law came to be compiled.² Of these the *Vivāda-bhaṅgārṇava* was compiled by Jagannātha Tarkapañcānana of Trivenī who was one of the greatest scholars of his time. Unfortunately his work has not been published uptill now. The *Vivādārṇava-setu*³ was composed by eleven best scholars of Bengal called together by Warren Hastings. The work was translated into Persian and thence to English by Halhed, the English version being well-known as a 'Code of Gentoo Law' which was published in 1776. Both these works were composed in the old style of preparing digests. Frequent references were made to old texts and all attempts were made to reconcile conflicting statements. But we also know of two works prepared exactly in the style followed in modern legal texts. These are the *Vyavasthā-darpaṇa* and *Vyavasthā-candrikā* of Śyāmācaraṇa Sarkār. The latter of these works with Urdu translation was published in 1935 V. S. (1879 A. D.).

We should now give a brief account of the work done by some of the greatest orthodox scholars of Bengal during this period in the various branches of study. The necessity of compressing the whole account in a short section of a

1. Twelve volumes of Notices were published by R. L. Mitra and H. P. Shastri. Descriptive Catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts in the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta have been published in 22 volumes. Three volumes of such catalogues of manuscripts in the Government collection of A. S. B. have also been published by H. P. Shastri. A catalogue of the grammatical Mss. of the A. S. B. was published long ago by R. L. Mitra.

2 It may be noted here that individual scholars like Jones and Colebrooke got similar works prepared by pandits of other provinces (I. O. III. 1505-1510).

3 It is curious that in the preface of the work published by the Venkateswar Press, Bombay it is stated to have been compiled at the instance of Ranjit Sing.

short chapter prevented us from attempting to refer to the very many poets of this period; for though stray verses of them are still sources of perennial enjoyment, very few of them are known to have composed any poetic work and the fame of most of them are due to works in other branches to most of which a reference has been made in the following pages.

Prānakṛṣṇa Bīśvāsa flourished almost immediately after the occupation of Bengal by the British. He was a big land-holder, a deep scholar and a great patron of Sanskrit learning. His ancestral home was at Khardaha, a few miles from Calcutta on the western bank of the Ganges. At his instance were composed several voluminous scholarly works some of which continue to enjoy a well-deserved popularity even to this day. The most famous of his works is a Tantra compilation called the *Prāṇatoṣiṇī* after his name and that of Rāmatoṣaṇa Vidyālaṅkāra who compiled it. His other published works are:—

1. Prānakṛṣṇa-auśadhāvalī—a work on medicine. 2. Prānakṛṣṇa-Vaiṣṇavāmṛta. 3. Prānakṛṣṇa-kriyāmbudhi. 4. Prānakṛṣṇa-śabdābdhi (composed in 1737 S. E. by Raghumaṇi elder brother of Rāmanandana Vidyālaṅkāra, son of Rāmānanda Nyāyālaṅkāra preceptor of Mahārāja Kṛṣṇacandra of Nadia.)

Some of his works, namely *Bhāsmakaumudī* and *Viṣṇukaumudī* are stated to be still unpublished. (*Viśvakoṣa* under Prānakṛṣṇa Bīśvāsa).

It will be seen from the literary activities of Prānakṛṣṇa that chaos and disorder did not follow on the heels of the British conquest, as may naturally be expected for in that event such literary activities would in no way be possible. It should also be noted that though the works go by the name of Prānakṛṣṇa they were not composed by him but by scholars employed by him as is stated in the introductory portions of the works themselves.

The next name to be mentioned is that of Rājā Rādhākānta

Rājā Rādhākānta. Deva. He was a great patron of learning and took keen interest for all literary activities of his time. His greatest achievement was the compilation of a voluminous lexicography in Sanskrit of an encyclopædic character. The work was named *Śabdakalpādruma*. It was first published in eight parts, including a part containing a

supplement. The first part appeared in 1822 A. D. in Bengali Characters and the supplement was published in 1858. Thus altogether thirty six long years were required to complete the work. It should be noted here that such a big work which necessarily entailed enormous labour and huge expenditure was distributed free among the scholars of the day.¹

This work came to be highly appreciated by scholars, both Indian and foreign.² It has already undergone several editions, mostly in Bengali characters. It is a pity that no Devnagari edition of it is available, its utility being thereby curtailed to a great extent. It is a storehouse of much useful information which has been of invaluable help to all workers in the field of Indology. Professors Roth and Boethling utilised the book the only modern work of India-as being highly important and of great use in the compilation of their monumental Sanskrit Dictionary. Their *Sanskrit Worterbuch* is replete with references to the *Śabdakalpadruma*.

Gaṅgādhara Kavirāja was born in 1798 A. D. in Jessore. He was a genius. His versatile scholarship (1798-1885) earned for him a name and fame that will not die out soon. He was a Vaidya by caste and was a physician by profession. Stories of his exceptional skill in diagnosis and treatment have almost become proverbial.

He composed about forty works in different branches of Sanskrit literature which give eloquent testimony to the depth of his scholarship. It is stated that he did not consider it worth while to bother about works that were not composed by ṛṣis (seers) as distinguished from ordinary men. He wrote commentaries only on two works that were not composed by a ṛṣi, namely a commentary on the *Mugdhabodha* of Bopadeva and a commentary on *Kusumāñjali* of Udayana. Other exegetical works of his are:—

1. Commentary on the *Carakasamhitā* called *Jalpakaṭparatu*. This is perhaps the most erudite of his works. But his

1. O. other instances of the distribution of valuable literary production mention may be made of the well-known Bengali translation of the *Mahābhārata* by Kāliprasanna Sinha and the edition of the *Mahābhārata* published by the Rājā of Burdwan.

2. A very commendable review of the work was published by Dr. Lenz in J. R. A. S. 1835 pp. 188 ff. It was referred to in highly eulogistic terms by Wilson in the first edition of his Sanskrit Dictionary (1819).

occasional digressions into philosophical topics has made it very difficult for beginners to follow.

2. Commentary on *Upaniṣads* like *Taittirīya* etc.

3. *Śūrīrakasūtra-Vyākhyāna*. 4. Commentary on *Īśvarigītā* and *Bhagavadgītā*. 6-9 *Bhūṣya* on Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Pātañjalasūtras. 10. Bhāṣya on *Gobhilaḥyāsūtra*. 11. Bhāṣya on the Āyurveda portion of Agnipurāṇa. 12. Commentary on *Kaumāra Vyākaraṇa*. 13. Gloss on the *Vārtikas* of Kātyāyana. 14. Commentary on Śāṇḍilya Sūtras. 15. Commentary on *Manusamhitā*. 16-17. Notes on Parāśara and Yājñavalkya Samhitā. 18. Commentary on the *Mugdhabodha*.

His original works were :—

In Kāvya :—*Durgavadha Kāvya*, *Harsodaya (Citrakāvya)*, *Śikhaṇḍi-prādurbhāva* (Romance), *Lokālokapuruṣīya* etc. In Rhetoric-*Prācya-prabhā* based on the *Alaṅkāra* chapters of *Agnipurāṇa*.

In Grammar-*Trikāṇḍaśabda Śāsana* and *Trisūtra Vyākaraṇa* both in verse.

In Purāṇa-*Bhāgavatavicāra* where proofs are adduced to show that the *Bhāgavata* cannot be regarded as a *mahāpurāṇa* (*Viśvaśa*-under Gaṅgādhara).

The list is sufficient to show the enormous and abnormal range of study of Gaṅgādhara.

It is a pity that very few of the works of this great scholar who lived and wrote not long ago, have been published - far less studied. Nor have all his works been preserved; only some of them are found described in the notices of Mm. H.P. Shastri. No estimate of his literary achievements is thus possible.

Of his works the commentary on *Caraka-Samhitā* has undergone several editions both in Bengali and Nagari characters. An edition of it in Bengali characters was published by his son Dharaṇidhara Rāy from Behampur in V. S. 1935. The *Taittirīyopaniṣad-vṛtti* was also published by his son from the same place in Nagari character (1291 B. S.). Fragments of some other works of his were also published in the periodical called *Gaṅgādhara manīṣā* which was being published from Calcutta by Kavirāja Jñānendra Nātha Sena in 1911 with a view to edit the works of Gaṅgādhara. But only a few issues of it are known to have been published.

Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati was a Professor in the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. His greatest literary achievement was the single-handed compilation of the Sanskrit lexicography called *Vācaspatya* after his name and complete in six volumes (Calcutta 1873-1884). He had also composed other works too numerous to mention. A reference may only be made to his *Āsubodha Vyākaraṇa* an independent grammar based on the Pāṇini.

Mr. Candrakānta Tarkālaṅkāra was one of the greatest savants in ancient Sanskrit lore that Bengal produced in the last century. He belonged to Serpur in Mymensing. His scholarship was not narrow and confined to a particular branch of Sanskrit literature. He was Professor of Sanskrit in the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta. His literary productions are varied and many, which have received almost universal appreciation. Of his original works mention may be made of his *Smṛti-Candrāloka* in which the views of Raghunandana are occasionally discussed and refuted. Only parts of the work are known to have been published (*Śuddhi*-1903, *Aurdhvadehika*-1906). His *Kātantraśāstra*, *Prakriyā* is a supplement to the *Kātantra* grammar which supplies the want of a Vedic grammar of the *Kātantra* school. Besides these he composed several *kāvya*s and dramas as well.

We may close our survey by a reference to Kāśīcandra Vidyāratna who came of a Brahman family of Vikrampur. His special subject of study was *Smṛti* in which he had earned an enviable reputation all over India. He had not that unbending conservative spirit, invariably found to be associated with scholars of this type which revolts against everything new in the society. On the other hand he had the courage and generosity to welcome all salutary innovations which were required by the exigencies of the time, and find out scriptural sanction for them. It was with this spirit that he wrote a very learned and illuminating commentary on the twenty Dharma Saṃhitās which guide the religious life of the present day Hindus. His commentary on the *Manu* alone has been published. An original work of him was the *Uādhāra-Candrikā* (Calcutta 1321 B. S.) in which he deals with the problem of taking back

into society those that have crossed the sea and have gone to western countries.

A class of work that was the special and entirely new characteristic of the period under review
Journalistic works. was the journalistic literature of Sanskrit.

With the introduction of the Press, journals came to be published in the different vernaculars of India. A section of the people actuated by a desire for the diffusion and revival of Sanskrit brought out journals in Sanskrit which they hoped would fulfil the object they had in view. The journalistic literature in Sanskrit all over India has an undoubted philological interest. Sanskrit of the journals shows how it is influenced by the different vernaculars in the different provinces. This kind of intrusion of vernacular idioms into Sanskrit has been the order for a long time past in the history of Sanskrit literature and it is palpable now as we are able to compare Sanskrit and the vernaculars side by side. A good many such journals were published from time to time from different parts of the province only to last for a short period.

One thing that attracts the notice of one engaged in the investigation of the contribution of Bengal towards Sanskrit literature is that Bengal like other provinces has not ceased to contribute her quota even to the present day when very few persons care to read things in Sanskrit. Works both exegetical and independent are occasionally published even now. Of these we may mention first those of Kavirāja Gaṇanātha Sena, M. A., L. M. S. His *Pratyakṣa-Śārira* or a Text Book of Human Anatomy in Sanskrit (Calcutta, 1919) and *Siddhānta-Nidānam* or Text Book of a Etiology, Pathology, and Symptomatology of diseases in Sanskrit (Calcutta, 1922) are two very important contributions to the medical literature of Sanskrit. We may also refer to the *Rasa-Jalanidhi* a work in Sanskrit on Hind Chemistry by Bhudeva Mukherji, (Calcutta 1926). We should also mention two important exegetical works namely the commentary on *Caraka Saṃhitā* and *Suśruta Saṃhitā* respectively by Kavirāja Jogindranātha Sen, M. A. and Kavirāja Haranacandra Cakravarti, both of whom are well-known physicians of Bengal. The latter of the two is probably the only physician of the present time who practises surgery according to the *Āyurveda* and thus seems to be quite competent to write a commentary on the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* which deals with surgery.

Besides these a good many works on Kāvya have been produced in recent years. Some of these could have received sufficient appreciation had the authors flourished several centuries back when Sanskrit scholarship was held in esteem and Sanskrit works were read with interest and care. We should however be failing in our duty if we do not mention the names of Pandits Rāmanātha Tarkaratna, Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa, Kālīpada Tarkācārya and Professor Hem Candra Ray Kavibhūṣaṇa, M. A.¹ Of these Tarkācārya excels in writing short lyrics.

It is common knowledge that owing to the comparative neglect of orthodox scholarship quite a number of scholars are passing their days unnoticed and unrespected who could have made their contribution—not in all cases worthless—were they given sufficient opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Even in spite of brevity and consequent incompleteness the above account will be sufficient to drive away a good deal of misconception with regard to the subject. And one will be surprised at the extent of this misconception even in enlightened circles. In an article entitled '*Bengali Literature*' (Calcutta Review—1871—Vol. LII—p. 294) no less a scholar and intellectual giant than Bankim Chandra Chatterji.² 'The Scott of Bengal'—wrote:—"It is a Bengali writer, Babu Rajendralal Mitra who has said that in ancient times Bengal was the Boestia of India. And the observation is correct. The contributions of Bengal to that ancient Indian Literature which still commands the respect and attention of European scholars were few and insignificant." In the face of the facts put forward it now remains for the reader to judge the accuracy of the above statement.

1. Several works of each of these have been published and are well known at least among the orthodox Pandits.

2. Though the article does not bear the name of its author Mr. Manmathanath Ghosh M.A., B.L. who has published a Bengali translation of it (*Bāṅgālā Sāhitya*—Gurudas Chatterji and Sons) attributes it to Bankim Chandra. Mr. Ghosh says that the name of the author is found in an advertisement of the *Selections from the Calcutta Review* undertaken by the publishers of the Review.